

THE

# Blue Jay

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# Blue Jay Chatter

Mr. Arthur Ward, of Swift Current, recalled to me the original suggestion of Mrs. Isabel Priestly, that was communicated to a selected group of known ornithologists and nature enthusiasts in the province. She believed that "there is sufficient interest throughout the land to give expression to God's wonderful creation of nature's way. Will those interested please communicate with me at 40 Agricultural Avenue, Yorkton, about the desirability of forming a Society that would bring together the nature lovers of Saskatchewan and beyond its borders."



Ten years have come and gone since the first issue of the Blue Jay was turned put by hand and put together by a small group of enthusiastic naturalists who had faith in the vision of their leader. Time had justified that faith. There was and is an ever growing number of men and women in the West whose most cherished possession is their ability to appreciate the beauty of the prairie, the forests, the lakes, and to derive a satisfying pleasure from a study of the flowers, bird's and other animals that are so lavishly distributed throughout.

These are the people to whom Mrs. Priestly referred; these are the men and women who not only derive happiness from the gifts of the natural world, but who strive to conserve these, the greatest of all natural resources, so that others may enjoy them for years to come; these are the people who so generously record their observations, so that others may derive from their experiences some of the thrill, the joy and the contentment which is theirs.

This is not only our anniversary number, but our hope also is that it will be a "get acquainted" number. We want you to meet some of those, described above, who have been instrumental in making the Blue Jay what it is today. That is the reason for the photographs. I had hoped to get a picture of each director and official, but, as might be expected some were too self conscious to send their pictures. It is hoped, however, that through this medium, we will meet at a later date, not only them but many others who have consistently contributed to the columns of our little magazine.



## In Memoriam



Each new issue of the "Blue Jay" in its smart new booklet form brings two thoughts to mind: first, how pleased Mrs. Priestly would be if she could see how well the "Blue Jay" is being carried on; second, what a debt we owe to Mrs. Priestly for the sound manner in which she founded and developed our bulletin.

Several leading naturalists have said that the "Blue Jay" has a quality of freshness and interest not achieved by any other publication. This unique characteristic originated with Mrs. Priestly, who did not confine herself to printing scientific records or general observations alone, but struck a happy balance between the two. Mrs. Priestly stressed the contribution to nature study that could be made by the amateur, and many of our members will remember the impetus they received from her friendly encouragement.

She was born, Isabel M. Adnams, in Newbury, Berks, England, on July 25, 1895. Previous to her marriage in 1918 to Robt. J. Priestly (then serving with the Canadian Army), she had been studying for a botanical research degree and had studied botany in England, Germany and Switzerland. Following residence in Winnipeg and Calgary the family moved to Yorkton in 1935.

The first issue of the "Blue Jay" was published in the fall of 1942, when Mrs. Priestly took the lead in organizing the Yorkton Natural History Society. She remained as president as well as "Blue Jay" editor, until her death, on April 23, 1946.

On this, our bulletin's tenth anniversary, it is only right that we honor the memory of its founder, Mrs. Priestly. No more fitting tribute could be paid than the continue improvement and success of our "Blue Jay."





## Patience and Peanuts

*By Marion Nixon, Wauchope  
Director S.N.H.S.*

To win a chickadee's trust, one needs only peanuts . . . and patience.

There is infinite satisfaction in nursing a crippled wild thing back to health, enjoying its friendly companionship as it convalesces . . . but this is forced friendship. For real thrill, there is nothing to compare with the triumph of winning the free confidence of a bird in its natural wild state.

This is surprisingly easy to do, with the Black capped chickadee, while the wee sprite's charm makes it a most alluring subject on which to practice one's own wiles. Of course, one must be content with cupboard love from a chickadee . . . . . or is their habit of frequenting the haunts of man, and following him about at his work in the bush, a sign they desire human companionship? Certainly, they soon reciprocate one's interest, demanding imperatively that notice be taken of their arrival, staying close while food is spread, and keeping up a running conversation meanwhile. They seem to enjoy any attempt to talk chickadee language back at them, and come

closer, sooner, if one mimics their notes.

And they do, heartwarming, remember to come back. My experience of feeding chickadees began six years ago. At first, until I realized they wanted meat instead of vegetables, I was disappointed that they would not come to the feeding tray; but when I put out suet and nutmeat slabs I had better success in attracting them. They found the free lunch hung from the veranda eave, followed it to the thermometer post in front of the kitchen window, and finally right against the pane of the kitchen storm window. Here we had a ringside seat to watch their pretty ways and varied personalities. The most engaging was a slim, smallish bird we later learned to know quite well.

The next August, to my surprise, delight, this chickadee squeaked at the window where she clung in futile search for the feeding tray. Disappointed, she left, and we saw no more till snow fell. Then, from three to six fed regularly, and we could stand with noses pressed to the inner window while their fathers bushed the storm sash six inches away. "Sweetheart" had less fear of people than the others, would fly less far and return more quickly when I went out to replenish the tray with nuts. As she got used to me, and ventured close, her mate would remonstrate with her about this foolhardiness, darting down in front of her when she flitted to a twig too close to me and driving her back into the tree.

I never saw one chickadee actually peck another, but if one flew forward in attack, the other always gave way. Yet a feeding bird was never attacked. If one had lit to feed, it apparently had right of way until it flew with its crumb of nut. Then another would alight on the feed tray. Only seldom, and then at extreme ends of the board tray, would two feed at the same time.

The third autumn, Sweetheart again announced their arrival by hollering at me from the tree by the window. That winter, I put the tray in the veranda and propped the door open after the snow got deep, the front path unused. Again, it was Sweetheart who first braved the confines of the screened porch and proved its safety to her mate. Then I would stand in a corner,

*(continued on page 15)*



# Touchwood Hills

By R. C. MacKenzie

Director S.N.H.S.

Where popular woods, and meadows lie,  
And blue swamp waters mirror sky.  
These hills, all varied shades of green,  
Are just as they have always been.



Arthur's farm lies in the rolling Touchwood Hill country. It was his homestead, and he has lived there most of his life. In his first days in the country he had been a stage driver. Over the old winding, rutted way that was once called Touchwood Trail, he had driven passengers and mail. Qu'Appelle to Fort Qu'Appelle and from the Fort to Cutawa, stopping house, stage post, and telegraph office, on the first telegraph line in the Saskatchewan country. A name almost forgotten now except by a few oldtimers. Many are the tales he can tell. Shades of rebellion and Indian warfare, horse-thieves, and hold-up men.

I was being shown some perfectly sound poplar logs taken from an old barn built over fifty years ago, and recently torn down to make room for a more modern structure. White poplar has been considered a poor building material as logs or lumber, but these logs had stood the test of time remarkably well.

Was not the White Poplar bigger and more plentiful in those early days? I asked. Arthur says no. Much land that was prairie then is covered with poplar bluffs now. There were big trees then, but the need for building logs soon almost eliminated the supply. Today, logs for building are not often sought after, and with the increase of oil-burning equipment in farm houses less trees are being felled for fuel. Now in coulees and on hillside beyond the reach of cultivation, trees are growing as tall as any seen by the first settlers.

The grasslands are making a comeback too. The last several years of abundant moisture have helped much.

The decrease of cattle on farms, resulting in less grazing, has given grasses and plants a chance to grow. Red patches of Tiger Lilies are common again. Seneca Root, an almost forgotten plant in most districts, can again be found near the edges of bluffs and woods. Indian Onion, Gailardia, Bluebell, Summer Aster, and coneflower are all on the increase.

I was interested in trees. Birch, Black Poplar, the many varieties of willows, but most of all in White Poplar, *Populus Tremuloides*, the Aspen of our bluffs and parklands.

The next day we roamed across several heavily wooded sections to find hidden groves of birch on the north slopes of hills, Black, or Balsam Poplar along the edges of sloughs, and White Poplar and willow abundant everywhere. I saw some of these trees that were fifty feet high and more than twelve inches in diameter which though not the tallest of their kind, are considered big trees in this part of the country.

Good seasons for growing, and the fact that more trees are being left to reach maturity, are factors that are helping bluff and woodland to recreate a new wilderness.

A week later I happened to be travelling along highway number 20 through the country east of Long Lake. East of the road the billowing hills of the Last Mountain country rose up ridge beyond ridge. The green wheatlands had infringed upon the lower slopes, but higher up were uncultivated grassy upland meadows dotted with bluffs, and beyond, covering the highest ridges, miles of dark green poplar

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# Derry and the Magician

Mrs. John Hubbard Director S.N.H.S.



It's not very often that you can find a real live magician in the strawberry patch -- at least that is what the caterpillar told Derry it was. Derry thought it was just an ordinary caterpillar and as he was supposed to be picking strawberries he put it in his pocket. So he was surprised when a little while later he heard someone say,

"I'm a magician."

Derry put his hand up to his ear and there was the caterpillar. "You're not a magician. You're just a green and black and-- goodness there's a lot of different colours on you! You're just a caterpillar even if you are a rather pretty one."

"I'm not pretty--I'm just clever."

"Clever! What can you do?"

"I can turn myself into something different altogether."

"It's a good trick if you can do it," agreed Derry.

"Why even the conjurer I saw last winter didn't do that. He turned eggs into rabbits, and rabbits into eggs, but he stayed a conjurer himself all the time."

"You just feed me lots of thistles and I'll show you."

"Thistles have prickles on them -- couldn't you eat something else?"

"I like thistles."

So Derry put the caterpillar in a tin with some small holes in the lid and

fed it lots of thistles. The caterpillar ate so many thistle, and Derry didn't like picking them, that Derry scolded it one day. "If you don't stop making such a pig of yourself you're going to burst out of your skin."

"Right you are," said the caterpillar, and did just that. And when it had crawled quite leisurely out of its skin it turned around and started eating it.

"Oh, for goodness sake," said Derry, "you don't have to eat your own skin. I'll get you some more thistles leaves,"

The next day Derry went to see the caterpillar it had already performed some magic. Instead of a caterpillar there was a pinky brown case hanging on the lid of the tin. A few days later gold spots appeared on the case and various lines and bumps could be seen through it. "Gosh," said Derry to himself, "I believe that caterpillar is going to turn into a butterfly, I hope it'll be one of those yellow and black fellows with the swallow tails. I hope it hurries up."

Derry got a bit tired of waiting for the caterpillar to perform its magic -- but one day it finally got around got it. When he opened up the lid instead of the chrysalis that had been hanging there for days he saw a big butterfly with its wings closed. Derry thought it looked a bit sick so he took it out in the sunshine and soon it spread its wings.

"My," said Derry admiringly, "you are a pretty butterfly I never thought that you would be that colour. You were green and black and yellow when you were a caterpillar, and kind of brown with gold spots you when were a chrysalis and now you're brown and red and white."

"Didn't I tell you I was a magician?"

"Yes, you sure are. And a good one. But what are you going to do now?"

"I'd like to see a bit of country. I'll find some of my own kind, and fly with them. It'll be fun flitting from flower to flower looking for nectar. And when I get tired of that I'll lay some eggs, and die."

"Die!" exclaimed Derry. "What do you want to do that for?"

"A short life and merry one," answered the butterfly, and away she flew.



# Summer Symphony

*Elizabeth Cruickshank*

*2nd Vice Pres. S.N.H.S.*

The full-foliaged month of June being also the home month for birds is our favorite time at the lake. Near our rain barrel eight varieties of nests were, or had been, occupied. Finches fed little balls of gold at our door. A busy little fly-catcher, coughing its "chebec, chebec" built a nest of plant down in the crotch of a choke cherry tree at our window. How neat a little home this was compared with the platform of twigs carelessly thrown together by mourning doves a few feet away. A week in the cherry company of so many birds went much too fast.

Judy had a surprise for us on one of our trips to the valley. There was a bog in their new pasture. To reach it we walked through fields of fleecy pyramids of meadow sweet. We passed a sea of gold, a slough transformed by bladderwort. Contemplating its way of life, the numerous bladders on its threadlike leaves keeping the plant afloat with its burden of beautiful bloom while trapping tiny water animals for food inspired in us as always a humble spirit before the handiwork of the Great Designer.

On the pasture slope, like fragments dropped from the summer sky, were mats of gentians, oblong leaved. Meadow blazing star with their gorgeously rich red-purple flowerheads and strikingly shingled involucre, were stunning besides everlasting and owl's clover.

A cow path led through the thicket of poplar and willow. If flowers enjoy the air they breathe, as birds enjoy the song they sing, they must have loved this air so laden with the fragrance of mint and warm soft earth. Here were new friends, a Lapland of discovery for Judy, while memories of "the dear dead days beyond recall" down East, were poignantly revived for her grandmother.

Gossamer webs, glistening with drops like dew, funnelled over the hum-

mocks. Green-flowered orchids and deep pink wintergreen enjoyed the shade, while in happy company were woodsorrel, fringed loosestrife, zizia, lobelia, grass of parnassus (always facing heavenward) buttercups, bog violets, shining arnica and the smaller fringed gentian with its classical vase shaped corolla when open, twisted when closed. Arrow, bluestem and cotton grasses neighbored other varieties of rush and grass. Frogs of all sizes hid in every cosy hollow. Odd pieces of diamond willow were gathered for next winters homework.

On the valley road badgers and skunks crossed our path. Flocks of yellow headed blackbirds flew over the little ponds in the flats crowded with mud-hens, their white bills sparkling.

With the raising and lowering of the water level in the lake we wondered how many baffled little creatures perished. But, life is changed.

On Judy's home pasture hill we found a clump of white among the purple bergamot and new to us too, coneflower with ray flowers of rich maroon



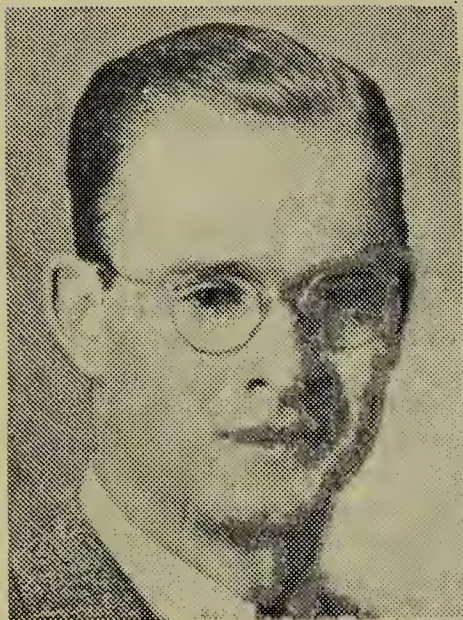
velvet. Deer mice with their silky white shirt fronts hopped over a fallen stump as we climbed to the hilltop. Here, as from a windowsill of heaven, we viewed the pageantry of the world below in its high summer grooming. Gardens were poems of colour harmony; patches of fields shining with gumweed, edged blue fields of flax. Waving fields of oats, tall fields of barley, their bearded heads drooping, fields of alfalfa, weighted with bees, all seemed incidental on the plains beside the miles and miles of wheat, now gold and ready for harvest.

Never more than fifty miles from home everywhere we were conscious of the warm and melodious symphony of sounds and sights of a summer that to us has been a memorable one.



# The Blue Herons of Qu'Appelle Valley

Doug Gilroy — Pres. S.N.H.S.



Every year in a naturalist's life there seems to be one special day that stands out above all the other days of the year. The "Special" day for me this year, occurred in the lovely month of June - the day we searched for the nesting colony of the Great Blue Herons.

Last winter a friend told me such a colony existed, and to him I am very grateful. I'll never forget that "Special" day. All the wild things we saw while searching for the herony seemed to have an extra attraction and beauty. Never did I see the sky a nicer blue, and the Qu'Appelle, never so much a technicolor green.

As we walked through the meadows Bobolinks and Redwing Blackbirds would fly up from the grass in front of us. Once, as we passed through a popular wood, we flushed a family of Ruffed Grouse. The young instantly hid in the heavy vegetation and the parent bird was

very excited and would "putt, putt" from tree to tree. once she lit on a branch only two feet above my head.

On further we found the prettiest little slough you could ever wish to see. It was completely surrounded with poplars and graceful willow trees. Its blue surface was studded with gold - the blossoms of Bladderwort. Then to make the picture complete, two wild ducks and their day old young swam out across it. On seeing us the mother quacked loudly and put on the "broken wing" act, splashing up the water in glittering sprays.

On we went again and shortly we saw a lone Heron flying high over our heads. Watching with field glasses we saw it land in a grove of tall maple trees along the river. Our pulse beat faster as we realized our goal might be in sight. We advanced quietly. No herons could be seen but as we drew nearer to the maples we began to hear a lot of odd gabbling and hoarse croaks.

Suddenly out of the tree tops burst two great birds! There before us was the first heron colony I had ever seen. What a Thrill! It was not as large a colony of some I have read of, as it contained only from 15 to 20 nests. From the ground the nests didn't look so big, but when taking colour pictures of the young, which always retreated to the far edge of the nest, the range finder registered six feet.

The nests were made of big slender sticks, loosely yet fairly substantially put together - high in the tree tops. Accidents do happen. One nest was tipped over and the young were spilled to the ground below. Each nest, we were able to look into, had four young about one-quarter to one-half grown. Under one nest we found some newly hatched egg shells. They are blue in color.



A herony is not a place of silence. the young are continually gabbling away among themselves and the old folks gossip back and forth.

One moment there wouldn't be a Heron in sight in the sky, then suddenly one would come zooming in from nowhere. What a racket there would be then! The young ones would "holler" at the tops of their voices, for they know mother or dad was returning from a trip to market with good things to eat. Just before the parent would land at the nest, it too, would let out a loud squawk which probably meant: "Get out of the way - stand back."

(continued on page 31)



## Cowbird Capers

*Arthur Ward, Director S.N.H.S.*

*Director S.N.H.S.*

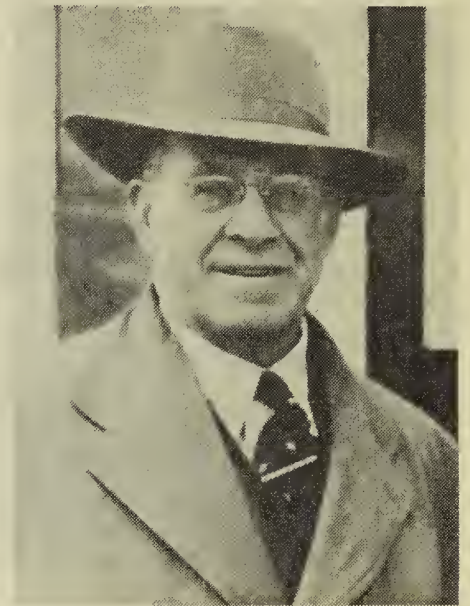
Pausing at the corner of the house, I heard a slight thud on the lawn as though a Robin's egg had fallen from the high tree. Walking over to investigate I could not see anything. On turning away there was another thud and looking down I saw a newly fledged Yellow Warbler and then I saw also the one that had fallen first. This was repeated twice more. On looking up into the tall poplar tree I observed the Warbler's nest, made of Cottenwood fluff, 35 feet up on a slender branch. What was the cause of all this!

At this moment Harold Baldwin, Swift Current's Leader Post representative, came along and we discussed the little tragedies that most birds are subject to. Here we surmised that our brave little Warblers had again fallen victims to the designing Cowbird.

The shock of falling from that height was too much, for two of the little ones were dead; the other two seemed lively. It was too high and far out on the branch to replace them. Had it been a lilac bush this easily could have been done. But what of the young Cowbird? It would seem that it had tossed overboard the rightful occupants.

I watched the nest for three days and observed the parent Warblers flying to the nest, then later I noticed that the nest had fallen also. It was not the neat deep little nest but rather flattened out. No young Cowbird was visible. I was just about ready to leave for the farm, so took along the two young fledglings, intending to place them with other parents. I had a nest in mind. Previously I had observed a Red-winged Blackbird's nest containing eggs, and also a groggy-eyed young Cowbird. My intention was to turn out the Cowbird and repalce it with the Warblers. But I found the Cowbird dead. Anyhow I put the two young Warblers in, thinking that adoption might again prevail. I waited until dark to see if the parents were covering them, but found them cold and neglected. So I took them back home and tried to hand feed them, but at this stage they need the parent's saliva. They soon died.

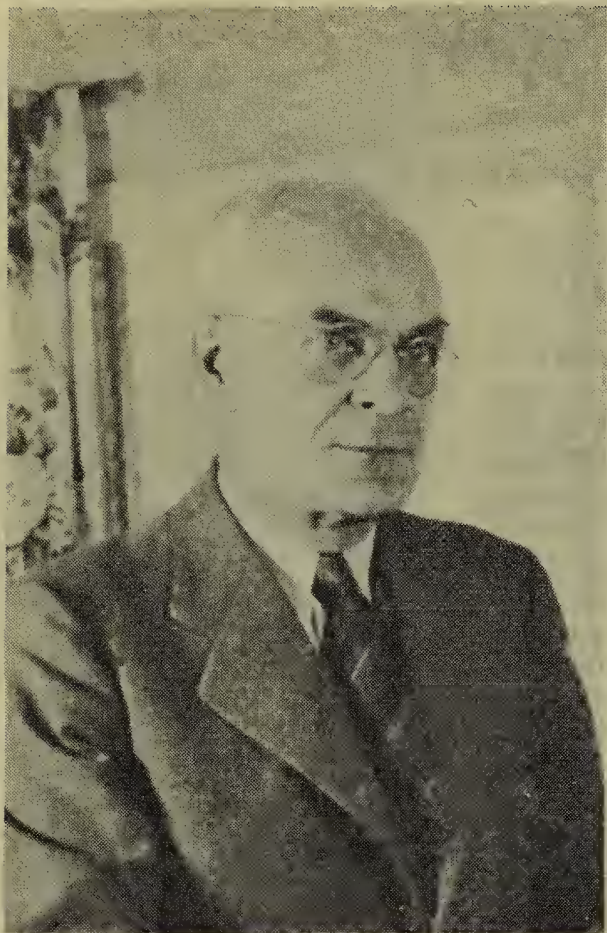
Of the known 276 species parasitized, the Yellow Warbler, owing to



its stay with us during the summer is the noticable and resentful. This case would resemble that of the English Cuckoo. The female Cowbird, in our experience, ejects the other eggs, different from the procedure of the parent Cuckoo which takes out one egg and leaves the young Cuckoo to dispose of the rest. With the aid of a natural hollow in its back, and still blind, it heaves the others overboard. Artificial objects, such as pebbles etc. placed there, receive the same treatment. The favourable dupes of the Cuckoo seem to be Wagtails, Hedge Sparrows and Sedge Warblers.

Neither the parent English Cuckoo nor the Cowbird know their young. The parent Cuckoos are away to Africa before the young are able to take care of themselves, but they get there eventually. The young Cowbird, having graduated to the fully fledged is absorbed into the flocks of the Blackbirds that gather in the fall.





## Thirty Happy Years

*E. W. Van Blaricom, Q.C.*

pair of Western Tanagers on July 4th, 1940, and a Spotted Towhee on May 31st, 1945. The Blackbilled Cuckoo came and went with the army worm attacking the poplars. The date was July 1st, 1948. The latest addition to single observations was the Philadelphia Vireo observed on July 10, 1948. As Columbus could never forget America, so the birdwatcher can never forget his new discoveries.

During these thirty years species of birds have come and gone. My first magpie was a curiosity. It had been caught in a trapline, a trapline and brought into me for identification on December 11th, 1923. Today Magpies can be seen in any trip in any direction. My first Baltimore Oriole was observed on June 4th, 1929. Now these charming birds nest yearly in our Doghide Valley. The first Hoary Redpoll was seen by my wife and bird companion on March 5th, 1930. It resulted in words of doubt and a much delayed dinner until identification had been verified (by me). Now these winter friends are quite common.

There's the reverse side of the picture. The Bald Eagle is only a memory. The Yellow-headed Blackbird is hard to find. Mountain Bluebirds visit us each spring but, finding no place to nest, pass on. Man with his bulldozer has had his effect upon the continuity of bird life in the district.

The older I grow the more I am convinced that no out-of-doors amusement, will better repay a busy man than the study of the birds that live around him. I am certain the author of "The Birds of Brewery Creek" would agree while J.J. Hickey in his "Guide to Bird Watching" makes use of an expression I have copied into each of my bird books. In closing I pass it along to each and all of you:—"To the ornithologist no corner of the earth is dull, no season without its compensations."

"After thirty odd years of bird watching in a small town of north-eastern Saskatchewan, what are your most pleasant and vivid memories?" Mr. Editor, you ask difficult questions.

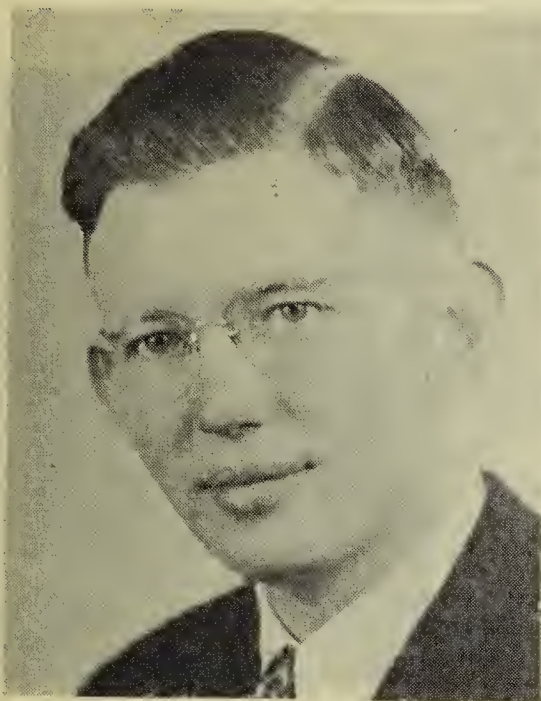
The most pleasant memories and satisfactions come from the helping hand given to beginners. It has been a pleasure to watch one generation after another acquiring a fascinating and wholesome hobby. Several have far exceeded their teacher in skill and tenacity. I am honoured to count among my bird children none other than Maurice G. Street, who is Bird Editor of *The Blue Jay* and who has done such good work with bird banding and with the bird census of his district.

The most vivid memories come from those birds which I have seen in this district on rare occasions only. The Lewis's Woodpecker was a find. It was observed on November 21st, 1925. The identification was verified by none other than the principal of Tisdale High School; L.T. Carmichael, present Editor of *The Blue Jay*. A pair of Bobolinks was seen in a meadow north of Valparaiso on June 23rd, 1929, a



## Birding at Good Spirit Lake

C. Stuart Houston, M.D. 1st Vice Pres., S.N.H.S.



I had been to Kitchemonetoo, Good Spirit Lake, many times as a youngster, but didn't remember what a unique place it really was. Mary and I revisited it this year - in fact, we were so pleased with it that we made a total of three visits there.

The lake is better known locally as "Devil's Lake", but who is responsible for this contradictory twist in nomenclature, I do not know. It is a relatively large lake, eight miles wide, oval in shape with a very regular shoreline. The sandy beach is hundreds of years wide, and sand dunes 10 or 15 feet high, wooded on top, mark the sharp transition between lakeland and farmland.

Our first discovery on June 23 was the Piping Plover. This is a paler, more diminutive edition of the Killdeer, with only one band around its neck instead of two. It is a common bird along the shoreline, with a pair every few hundred yards, emitting their clear piping note. Half an hour's quiet observation of one male revealed that he consistently went from the beach to a group of rocks fifty yards back from the shore. We then searched the area carefully, knowing that the eggs would look at first glance like two more pebbles. The frantic

"broken-wing display" of the parents told us we must be getting near. However, Mary finally found, not eggs, but a well-camouflaged downy fellow squatting perfectly still in the sand. I had thought that little Killdeers a few days old were about as cute as anything could be, but a little Piping Plover of the same age is smaller, more delicately colored and cuter still. His three brothers and sisters, all the same size, were soon seen twenty yards distant running after their mother. They had well developed legs and ran at a phenomenal speed for such little creatures. Then when their mother gave a different signal, they would squat flat in the sand and remain stationary even when touched.

My best birding record for the summer was made June 26, two miles east of Good Spirit Lake. While driving along at about 30 mph, a yellow-breasted bird flew across the car just a few feet in front of the windshield. Mary thought it looked liked a Arkansas Kingbird, which it did indeed in certain respects. However, the northern edge of their range is more open country than twenty miles south, and I wondered if it might not be a Crested Flycatcher. I stopped and was fortunate in locating the bird with its mate, about fifty yards in from the road. They called from the edge of the poplars, then sat on the fence to display their rufous rumps and ruffled head feathers - the first Yorkton district record for the Crested Flycatcher! After awhile, they flew to another bush, and sat on the limbs of a hollow dead stump. They became quite excited when I approached, and I found their young in a hole on the stump eight feet from the ground. So I found not only a new species for the district, but obtained a new nesting record as well.



Another new nesting record for the district was made on June 26 when we found a nesting colony of Common Terns on several small sandy spits just offshore, along the east shore of Good Spirit Lake. These birds, although immaculate in appearance,

(continued on page 23)



# Roadside-Golf-Course Natural Science

(Cypress Hills Provincial Park, Saskatchewan)

By H. C. Andrews, Prin. Normal School, Moose Jaw, Director S.N.H.S.

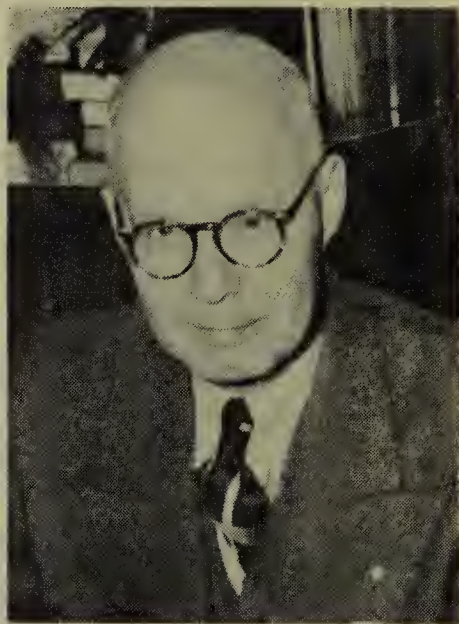
We ( Mrs. A. and writer ) drove into Cypress Hills Provincial Park Sunday evening, August 3rd. The lodge and cottages are situated around a beautiful little lake created by building a dam on a site originally selected by a company of beaver engineers.

In the woods that cover the low-lying hills surrounding the lake, lodge-pole pine and aspen popular predominate. The stand of lodge-pole pine in the Park is said to be one of the most extensive in North America. Immediately around the lake a good growth of spruce is gradually establishing itself.

Exercise, through the medium of golf, was a main reason for our going to the Park. So on Monday, not too early, we headed for the beautiful, challenging, nine-hole golf course. Roadsides along the way were ablaze with color- purple fireweed, mauve bergamot, blue asters and hare-bells, yellow agoseris and golden rod, and white yarrow and caraway vying with each other to add their measure of beauty. The golf course is situated back from the camp site where the woods begin to give way to more open country. Trees along some of the fairways cause plenty of trouble for many players. In open stretched boarding other fairways, and throughout the woods, millions of wild flowers display their beauty. The fairways, too, which had not recently mowed, were strewn with purple and white fleabane daisies, yellow agoseris, purple amny-flowered gentian, silvery pussy toes and others. It was almost like playing golf in a huge garden.

Nature plants in a wide variety of arrangements. Here a mass of purple fireweed. There a patch of rose-tinted paint brush. Across the way, white caraway. In places, all the color seemed to be present in a great planting of many varieties. Sometimes the colors of only two or three varieties were mixed together.

We soon found that wild flowers challenged and interested us almost as much as golf. One hike around the lake, one special trip to the golf course, one tramp back through the woods, and a bit of observing and collecting when out in the rough looking for golf balls, yielded a total of 59 identified wild flowers, nine wild fruits, and 10 weeds. We also found juniper, bearberry, dogwood, sheperdia and snowberry. In a quiet corner of the lake, were tiny, white



water crowfoot flowers. It was a treat, too, to find such plants as bunchberry, red and white baneberry, and fairy bells, in parts of the woods.

On one fairway, a view across several miles of country liberally dotted with bluffs - the darker green of the pine contrasting strikingly with the lighter color of the spruce presented a truly beautiful picture.

We kept our eyes open for birds and saw numerous juncos, several chickadees and sharp-tailed grouse, one cedar waxwing, one red-breasted nuthatch, and one ruffed grouse. It was a great thrill for me one day to identify a lone western tanager. Another day, a single meadowlark streaked across a fairway in what I would say was not typical meadowlark country. A flock of bluebirds "played golf" with us frequently. I have identified them as "mountains", but it is possible they were "westerns".

Once we surprised (or vice versa) a white-tail doe with twin fawns. We were advised that in the fall deer are plentiful in the Park. There are also elk. Another time we discovered four beaver dams in succession, each dam some 25 - 30 feet below the one above it. There were no signs of recent activities. I believe beavers are not welcome "guests" in the Park. Richardson's ground squirrels were too common on several fairways. Two newly excavated

(continued on page 13)



# Crow Regimentation

Cliff Shaw

Past Pres. S.N.H.S.



in a group as though making plans for their flight. When the gathering of leaders dispersed each walked up and down the rows giving orders to their regiment, as it were. It seemed to me their were two or three leaders assigned to each row. Judging from the way they left the ground there would be 20 leaders, as near as I can remember.

On the take off the two leaders of each row went first. The first rows followed, not in a group but one after another just like soldiers keeping in step.

About one or two minutes later the third and fourth rows to the rear of the first two lines followed their leaders and the fifth and sixth, extending East and west at a right angle to the other lines, followed likewise.

While the following observation is not my own I can readily vouch for the facts as the observer was my mother Mrs. Walter Shaw of Bulyea.

Our home was on the edge of the village, approximately 50 miles Northwest of Regina, and was separated from the farm fields a few hundred yards to the West by No. 20 highway.

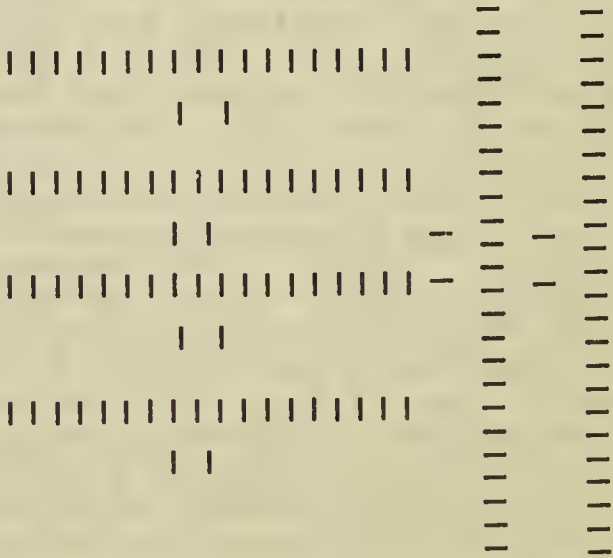
One morning in late fall my mother was upstairs doing her housework and as she glanced out the west window was amazed to see hundreds of crows lined up in six lines on the nearby stubble field. (See diagram)

They appeared as though formed into regiments and with the exception of what would appear to have been the leaders every crow stood along a line as straight as if it had been drawn by a ruler.

But I'll let my mother tell the story as she wrote relating it to me.

"At the start the leaders were

It may have been in the early afternoon or late noon. I was cleaning the West upstairs window when I noticed them. The lines were perfectly straight and all the leaders were gathered in a group. They were sure making some noise. The fields was in stubble and there was a slight skiff of snow on the ground. It surely was a wonderful sight and I only wish you could have seen them."





# Wanted: Good Amateur Naturalists

*J. F. Roy, Meadow Lake*

*Director S.N.H.S.*

Every person, at one time or another, is faced with the situation in which he finds himself stymied when trying to put over an idea. Teachers, in particular, know the difficulties of impressing young minds with ideas and ideals.

I can never forget an incident which occurred last spring. It was one of those glorious May mornings when the poplars were brilliant in their new greens and a gentle breeze carried the scent of fresh, sap-filled leaves through our classroom windows. I am afraid that both students and teacher were in the grip of "Spring Fever". Teen-age minds were miles away, roaming through the hills and fording the streams. "Teacher" was stressing the importance of attentive listening in mastering a foreign language.

Suddenly, an idea came to me, and I asked, "Do you people think you are really attentive listeners? Do you listen with understanding? Let's test you out, eh?" A flicker of interest appeared on their faces and they were game for the test. The test was a simple one.

"I want everyone in the room to remain absolutely silent for one minute and then tell me what bird songs, if any, you can hear through the open windows..." Silence... only the clock ticking, and the mixed humming of flies in nearby shrubbery... then the occasional call or chirp which betrayed the presence of a bird nearby. How much of it registered on these untrained ears? "Jane", I asked, "what did you hear?" "Oh there, were two birds, but I don't know what they were... maybe a robin, I don't know". Similiar responses came from all over the room. "If you had known what to listen for, and had been attentive listeners, you would have heard seven distinct songs in those sixty seconds". I replied. "Seven?", they chorused, incredulity clearly written on their faces. The class had to be shown, so we brought Nature into middle of a the French class. I think they begin to understand two ideas for the first time: (1) Few of us are really keen listeners (2) Nature has innumerable sounds and signs which challenge our interest and attention.



What songs had we heard? One by one, our avian performers repeated their melodies. First came the cowbird and his ready whistle, then three varieties of sparrow - song, clay colored and vesper. Then one which they had all noticed but failed to identify, the yellow warbler. Finally, the spasmodic "chebecs" of a least flycatcher and the liquid "okerees" of a male red-winged blackbird. They were convinced.

Our reader may ask, "Why this extended tale, and how does it relate to the title?" I am trying to illustrate a point, and that is that every teacher can use Nature as a handmaiden in school lessons. Nature is all around us; we are part of it. Nature study can establish a bond of unity between the teacher and his student; it can integrated with every subject; it deepens our sense of the beautiful and the good; it broadens the interests and enlivens the sense of young and old alike.

With a few references guides, an inexpensive field glass and a notebook, any teacher is equipped to explore the marvels all about him. The initiate can learn with his student: those with experience can pass their wisdom along and share anew in the in the endless delights which discovery of new phenomena provides. Thirty pairs of young eyes and ears are bound to discover new specimens, new facts, new haunts. No one is too old to learn; nothing is ever fully understood.

This year, resolve to do something about Nature study in your classroom. Start a museum, go for hikes across the fields and coulees, collect the old nests of this season's hatch, watch the animals and insects as they prepare for winter, study the birds in migration, build some bird houses... the possibilities are many. When a program

*(continued on page 27)*



# Probable Early Migration Routes

Allan J. Hudson, Mortlach

Director S.N.H.S.

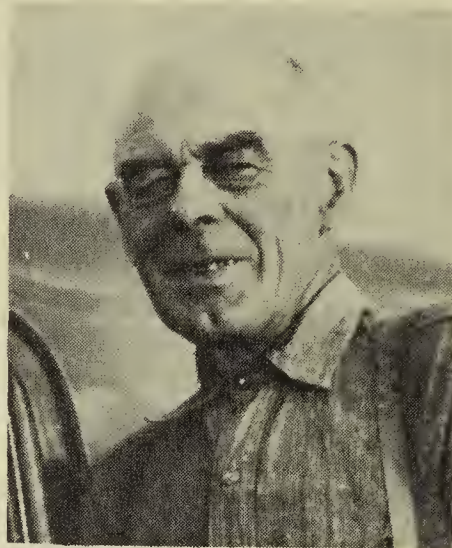
At present the probable migration route of the earliest visitors to North America is a matter for speculation. If they came along the river systems of the north they'd arrive in central Alberta in due course. There, they would have the choice of keeping close to the Rockies or else following the unique drainage system that I have described.

It would, in fact, be easier to travel in a general southeasterly direction towards the heart of the continent, thence to fan out in other directions. One advantage would be the plentiful and varied rock material associated with these channels, especially in the parallel channels and eroded contiguous areas - materials that could be used for making stone tools. The earliest migrants had the pick of the material. The most favored stopping places would be areas adjacent to the channels where consequent streams fed by springs were trapped by the channels.

It seems odd that Mortlach is the only place in Saskatchewan associated with Folsam points. The question arises whether the makers of the points were already practising the method when they arrived in North America. If so, the points could have been left on the southward migration, and other examples could be expected to show up along the possible migration routes. If the method was a later evolution then Folsam man would be in this district at a later expansion from the south and one would look for more examples to show up in that direction.

At the present time I am involved in the job of helping Boyd Wettlaufer carry out some excavating in the Besant valley. It can be exacting work and hard on the knees.

First a square must be staked out of suitable dimensions, say 36" or 48" sides; squared and lined up by compass; the stakes leteered and dimension



marks out on top to measure from. Twine is tied around the square. Then at the zero point, as regards altitude, a string is tied around a stake, the surface of the square cleaned and the contours of the surface taken at one inch intervals and plotted on the diagram in the note book used as a record. Then the scraping of the surface with trowels begins.

When material of archaeological value is exposed, it is measured from at least two stakes. Also a perpendicular from another side and the depth measurements are taken. From this last is subtracted the contour measurement at that point. From a record kept in this way an exact reproduction could be made of the site excavation. There is also much photographing when something of special interest is uncovered.

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Road side-Golf-Course -

(continued from page 10)

underground homes suggested badgers, although we did not see them. One day a red squirrel warned us not to come too close.

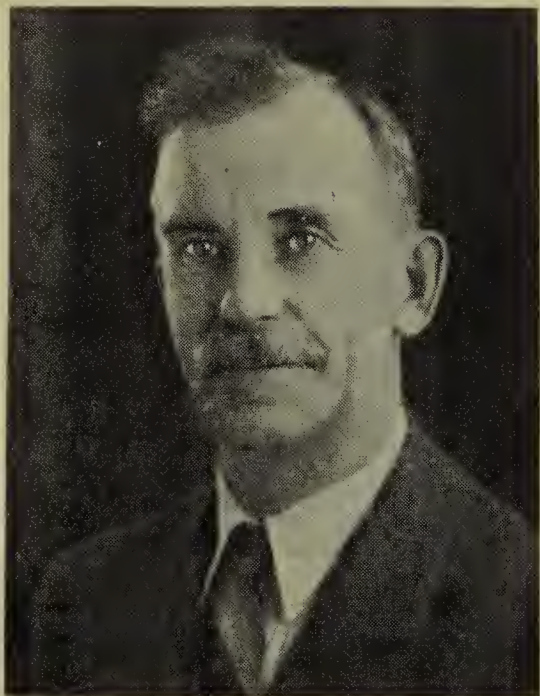
The Cypress Hills Park is truly a naturalist's paradise. We do not pretend to have even approached a complete survey - it wouldn't have been roadside-golf-course natural science if we had.



## Pretty But Somewhat Smelly

Archibald C. Budd, Swift Current, Sask.

Director S.N.H.S.



A while back I wrote of the Gumbo Evening-primrose, our sweetest smelling plant. We might this time consider a rather unpleasantly scented species, the Spider-flower. It has been given several common names and also several scientific ones. We find it called Rocky mountain Bee-plant, Stinking-clover, Pink Cleome and Indian-pink, also Cleome serrulata, the generally accepted name, Cleome integrifolia and Peritoma serrulatum. Nevertheless it has an odour all its own, but makes amends for it by its beauty.

Spider-flower grows from 1 to 2½ feet high, is very branching and has leaves bearing three lanceolate leaflets from 1 to 3 inches long. The flowers are pink or sometimes white with four sepals and four petals, with six stamens which protude considerably beyond the petals and give a fuzzy appearance to the inflorescence. The seed pods are from 1 to 2 inches long and contain a single row of rather large seeds. These pods are on a short stalk which extends above the flower and often the remains of the petals and sepals can be seen at the joint on the stalk.

On the virgin prairies this was a plant of disturbed light soil, rodent mounds, animal trails in sandy soils and such locations, but with the advance of settlement it finds many very favourable sites, roadside cuts, shoulders of grades, railway grades and so on. Frequently, in the southern part of the province, it will form a low, pretty hedge for miles along the roadside and seems to thrive in the drier and dustier areas. As one of its names implies, it is a good source of bee food in spite of its odour. At one time I understand a move was made to use the seeds for oil extraction but apparently the character-



(continued on page 31)



## Purple-Flowered Moss Phlox

*Arch. C. Budd (Swift Current)*



In reference to the purple flowered Moss Phlox mentioned in the last Blue Jay, this form is fairly common in the area from Swift Current south. The most striking and deepest purple patch we have seen is right on No. 4 highway, but many smaller and paler clumps have been found. I do not know if the colour is permantly purple or mauve as some patches I found, photographed and marked this spring were white flowered when I visited them a week later. We have sometimes found that Moss Phlox will flower in the fall.

Many of our native plants show great variation in colour. On one knoll at Eastend one spring we found Smooth Blue Beard-tongue (*Pentstemon nitidus*) in all inter-shades from its normal deep blue, through purple, red and pink to pure white. White Spider-flowers (*Cleome serrulata*) instead of pink are quite common, and often a white flowered Wild Bergamot (*Monarda*) can be found. The pink Shooting-star (*Dodecatheon*) frequently has a white form as does the all too common Canada Thistle.

### *Patience - (continued from page 2)*

merely talking to them. Presently I could move closer. This took weeks of of winter patience, but once they got used to my presence close at hand, progress was much quicker. One day, I sat down and put my hand, peanut laden, where the tray had been. Sweetheart cussed, and hesitated, flitting back and forth in disgust. But finally she took the plunge, and lit on my finger. Her dismay, when she felt soft flesh instead of unyielding twig, was comical. Literally, she nearly fell off backwards, but did hold on.

I kept my hand utterly still; though I was bursting to shout with exultation, I only wheedled her with my usual "tzick-a-dee-ing". Suddenly she leaned forward, grabbed a bit of nut, and fled. I dashed indoors to proclaim my success.

In but a few days Sweetheart would light on my hand with little hesitation, except to look the situation over with beady black eyes as chickadees always do. Soon she would come, outdoors, to a peanut tied to my hat and then to my hand as I stood by the clothesline or

under a tree. Finally to my supreme triumph and exquisite delight, one day she lit on a peanut held between my lips and pried the nut out of the opened half, shifting so her claws clenched on my lip, and with her tail tight propped against my chin. Once she, ran up my face to search for other nuts on my hat leaving the tingle of pleasure that she trusted me to linger when she flew away. Only when I wore a fur collar would she refuse to come to my face.

Her mate reluctantly came to by hand for food, but never to my lips. The following winter, the smallest of their current bird also learned to feed from my hand, and I wonder now if it is the one who reminds me so of my vanished pet.

For alas, Sweetheart's foolhardiness must have been her undoing. A year ago she, as usual, called to me when she returned; and darted down to the promptly proffered peanut. Summer wariness would not at once give way to remembered trust of me . . . but I never had another chance to tempt her.

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## VIOLETS (VIOLA) OF SASKATCHEWAN





# Violets of Saskatchewan

August J. Breitung

Botanist, C.E. Farm, Ottawa



Eight species of violets (*Viola*) occur in Saskatchewan (Plate 1). All have irregular 5-parted corollas, the lower petal spurred; stamens short and included, the anthers more or less coherent and two of them with an appendage projecting into the spur; capsule 3-valved, each boat-shaped and several seeded. After opening, each valve, as it dries, folds firmly together lengthwise, thus shooting the smooth, hard seeds in all directions, sometimes three feet distance. In addition,

other agencies have probably assisted in the distribution of violets such as rivers, wind animals, and birds.

Besides petaliferous flowers, some violet species produce also closed or cleistogamous flowers without petals, at or near the surface of the ground and are self-fertilizing in the bud.

Violets flourish in all parts of the province under a wide variation of environment from the dry windswept plains in the south to the rich moist forest region to the north; along streams, in bogs and on gravelly hills. A murmuring brook fringed by countless fragrant blue violets, each delicate flower glistening with dew drops in early morning, is a memory never forgotten.

1. *Viola adunca* J.E.Smith. HOOKED-SPUR VIOLET. Tufted plant with short stout rhizome; stems leafy, spreading to ascending, 2 to 6 in. long, densely puberulent to glabrous; lvs. cordate-ovate to round-ovate, narrowed toward the apex, .5 to 1.5 in. broad, entire to crenate; flrs. mauve to violet-blue, 3 lower petals white at base, veined with dark violet, spur hooked or straight (*Viola subvestita* Greene). Common in dry sandy open woods, rocky slopes and moist meadows on prairie. May -- June.

2. *Viola nephrophylla* Greene. NORTHERN BOG VIOLET. Plant stemless; lvs. and peduncles arising from a short thick rhizome; blades cordate-ovate to reniform, 1 to 2 in. broad, often broader than long, glabrous, purplish tinged beneath, crenate; flrs. on peduncles 3 to 4 in. long, equalling or overtopping the leaves; petals deep bluish-violets, white at the base, bearded, spurred petal veined with darker violet. Common in shade along margins of cold streams, lakes and in bogs. May -- June.

3. *Viola Nuttallii* Pursh. YELLOW PRAIRIE VIOLET. Plant tufted from a tapering rootstock; stems at first obscure, lengthening as the season advances; lvs. lanceolate to elliptic, wavy margined, ciliate, pubescent beneath, petioles slender, pubescent; flrs. yellow, back of the 2 upper petals purple, the 3 lower petals veined with dark brownish-purple. (*V. vallicola* A. Nels.; *V. Russellii* Boivin). Sandy semi-arid plains. May -- June.

4. *Viola plustris* Linn. MARSH VIOLET. Plant stemless, glabrous; leaves and peduncles from a slender creeping rhizome, stolons forking, leafy-tipped; lvs. broadly cordate-ovate to reniform, thin glabrous, crenate, 1.5 to 3 cm. broad; flrs. fragrant, lilac-purple to nearly white, on peduncles overtopping the leaves, 3 lower petals veined with dark violet base of laterals bearded,

(continued on next page)



spur short, less than 2 mm. long. Occasional along cool forest streams and swamps. June -- July.

5. *Viola pedatifida* G. Don. PURPLE PRAIRIE VIOLET. Plant stemless, minutely, pubescent to glabrate, from an erect rhizome; lvs. divided to the base into many segments; flrs. large, 12 to 15 mm. across, reddish-violet, usually overtopping the leaves, the 3 lower petals veined with darker violet and densely bearded at the base; sepals ciliate. Dry gravelly hills; plains. May.

6. *Viola Rafinesquii* Greene. FIELD PANSY. Slender leafy stemmed annual, simple or branch, 3 to 6 in. high; lvs, small, basal ones rounded, the cauline spatulate to obovate, slightly undulate; stipules leaf-like, deeply cut; flrs. bluish-white to cream, 7 to 10 mm. long, or twice as long as the sepals. (*V. Kitaibeliana* R. & S. var *Rafinesquit* (Greene) Fernald). In grain fields, introduced from Eurasia. May -- July.

7. *Viola renifolia* A. Gray. KIDNEY-LEAVED VIOLET. Plant stemless, glabrous or pubescent; rhizome, non-stoloniferous; lvs. to orbicular with open sinus, coarsely crenate, 1.5 to 5 cm. broad, lustrous beneath; flrs. white, on peduncles 3 to 3 in. long, petals beardless, the 3 lower veined with purple. (*V. Brainerdii* Greene). Frequent in cool, rich moist woods May -- June.

8. *Viola rugulosa* Greene. TALL STEMMED WHITE VIOLET. Stems 8 to 24 in. high, single or few from a slender rhizome, spreading rapidly by elongating, forking subterranean stolons; lvs. broadly cordate-ovate, short acute, slightly wrinkled, dentate, pubescent beneath, sinus deep, basal lvs. on long petioles, the blades sometimes 4 in. broad when fully developed; flrs. from axils of the upper leaves, petals 10 to 12 mm. long, white, yellow at the base, the 3 lower veined with dark violet, all suffused with reddish-violet on the back. (*V. Rydbergii* Greene). Woods especially abundant in the aspen grove section. May -- July.

## Touchwood Hills --

(continued from page 3)

woods. By way of a winding earth road I made a side trip into the hills. Leaving my car on a hillcrest, I entered the cool green depths of the woods. Through underbush of Saskatoon-bush, past the fruiting season but still bearing some sweet purple berries, through tangled thickets of chokecherry, dogwood, willow, and pincherry, up steep banks where wild raspberry still held delicious juicy fruit, I followed a narrow winding deer trail that led me to a small slough where ducks rose in scattering flight from the water, and redwing blackbirds perched on swaying rushes.

Beyond the slough, the trail led out into the sunlight again. Across grassy meadows gay with flowers, Yarrow, Bluebell, Coneflower, and Bergamot. A country unspoiled, almost untouched by the hand of man; this is how it must have looked a hundred years ago.

Wide stretches of wheatland now cover the once grassy vastness of the Buffalo Plains, but here high in the

hills the scene is little changed. It needs only a cree hunter with bow, arrow, and knife stalking along the winding trail through the cool and shady places, or on the windswept upland meadows, a deerskin clad figure, mounted on a light footed half-wild pony.

Isaac Cowie from Fort QuAppelle, scouted this country for the Hudsons Bay Company in 1871, seeking a good site for the then new trading post of Last Mountain House, later located near the south end of the lake. More than once these wooded hills were the gathering place of Metis buffalo hunters. Brigades of over a hundred carts have gathered here. Indian woman preparing food over many fires, lighting the night like grounded stars. Cree words mixed with french in merry chansons. Wild revels, solemn councils, at unrecorded meetings long ago.

These are shadows from the past, but in the wild and unspoilt places nature changes little, flower and tree, sky and hill remain the same.



# A Pilgrimage to the God Stone

J. Turnquist, Wallwort



Early on the morning of the first of June my friend, Mr. Hunt, and I started out to see for ourselves the God Stone, of which we had heard so much.

The Stone's location is on the bank of the Red Deer River, about fifteen miles north-east of Archerwell, Sask., and on the old Indian trail from Nut Mountain to the Pasqua Hill country.

We met some of the people living in the vicinity and gathered some information from them. After taking off on foot a mile and a half we arrived at the stone. We found a large limestone, two and a half paces long by two paces wide and about five feet of it out of the ground. It has a crack running all along it, with an opening of about two inches and several smaller cracks.

I had heard of this stone for some time and that the Indians left offerings here to the gods. Our visit proved to us that they still do, for we found some old clothing including a child's blouse, showing very little wear, old mits, a pair of rubbers and the remains

of tobacco, and cigarette paper wrappings, etc.

Locally it is believed that the Indians left offerings of money (coins) in the large crack of the Stone, and so there is danger that some passer-by may try to recover a dime or two from it. However I discounted that idea very much, for the Indian never was man of money.

There is neither writing nor markings on the Stone, but the trail showed horse tracks and indicated that wagons had passed that way not long ago. The old trail is cut off in many places, and the site of the stone itself is in an out-of-the-way place. The river bank, close by, has a good spring. We found the river high and very swift, but were told that summer or fall it may be dry.

My friend and I left no offerings, but we took a couple of snaps one of the writer pointing to the crack in the stone — the other to the offerings. You will notice a pair of rubbers and directly above them the blouse, mentioned above.

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Patience — (continued from page 15)

I saw her once more, hopping in and out the crack at the bottom of the warped veranda door. Next day she did not return. Nor did I set out food for the others till they came seeking nourishment in stormy weather.

This year the chickadee came back in July from their far-pasture migration.

Obviously they expected nuts, though all are more timid than Sweetheart was, in demanding them. One small bird has much of her mother's engaging personality. Perhaps, if I do not tempt them indoors again they will remain wary of marauding cats; and to gain their trust will not be to betray it, as I feel I did before.





## Along The Byways

*By Elizabeth B. Flock*

There is a surprising amount of nature lore to be picked up while cruising slowly over the many side roads leading out of Regina. Such evenings with friends have become delightful memories as the season closes.

The tremendous amount of water standing in the low places for so many weeks attracted numbers of shore and water birds. Often they were so close that we could watch them from the car windows going about their own affairs, but let one of us step onto the road and they were away in a flash of wings.

After many years of doing both, I feel it is much more rewarding to watch birds wherever they are seen than to tear madly over the country merely jotting down each species in an effort to secure the longest list possible.

At one time there were willets taking a bath with every evidence of intense pleasure. Others had gone mad, tearing about in circles evidently in pursuit of some elusive food. Merely looking at black-bellied and golden plover sent a thrill along the spine when trying to visualize the country over which they had traveled. Just returning from Patagonia, they were headed far north, but stopped for a dip in our sloughs.

Ducks in spring with the evening light full upon them showed colors not noticed otherwise. They might be a pair of pintails that had taken over a pothole, or a number of ruddy ducks dashing up and down a water lane in their full regalia. There was never a dull moment.

One byway brought us to several

upland plover on the ground, alighting with upstretched wings on fence posts, or flying about. Another led to the discovery of a meadowlark's nest in an open stubble field rather than among grasses as we find them usually.

Yet another brought us to a slough where four gorgeous avocets voiced disapproval of our presence. They put on wild displays of broken wings and legs even more convincing than those of killdeer. A young bird was discovered stretched perfectly flat on the ground and absolutely motionless where it remained as long as we were in sight.

At times Hungarian partridge and prairie sharp-tailed grouse whirled away or walked stealthily seeking cover. When a prairie sharp-tail remained in the road, we stopped to watch. Suddenly, it went into a dance all alone. A yellow band of feathers showed above each eye as the head was lowered. Purple air sacs on both sides of the neck were inflated. With stiffly spread wings and feet stamping in quick short steps, it danced in a semi-circle to a certain point where it whirled as if pulled by a string to retrace its step only to repeat the performance. When the bird disappeared finally behind a clump of willows, one of us stepped out of the car to investigate and instantly two females flew up from the grass to join the dancer in a hasty retreat.

One evening driving across Wascana valley and along the rim we counted twenty deer from the Old Crossing to the second bridge beyond. Some were close to the road, other were specks on the valley floor that came into focus when viewed through our glasses. Was it just good luck or have deer increased lately?

From time to time skunks have formed part of the evening picture. We watched one in a great hurry gallop over a plowed field, cross the road behind us and disappear into a tangle of bushes without appearing to notice us at all. None of us had the temerity to find out whether the home den was there or not. Another, a half-grown skunk, was so engrossed in catching

*(continued on page 31)*



## Feeding Hummingbirds

*Madeline B. Runyan, Punnichy*



I had a most interesting letter from a bird lover in Nanaimo, B.C., asking how to go about attracting Hummingbirds. To all such, I would suggest these points:

(1) Place your most showy houseplants in the window to which you wish to attract the birds.

(2) If possible have a windowbox or flower bed under the window. I have a box of nasturtiums on a cement block below mine, and am fortunate in having my flower garden the full length of the house, on the east.

(3) Arrange bright paper around the mouth of small bottles, filled with honey and water. The birds do not like a sticky syrup, about three teaspoons to a cup of water seems to suit their taste best. I use rain water.

(4) With fine wire or adhesive tape, fasten the bottle at a slant, outside the window and watch for the first Hummingbird.

(5) When a bird is well established, put out a bright egg cup, but leave the bottle also until she is accustomed to the new container.

These little birds are very timid at first, so one must be very still while watching. After three summers I can approach the window from the inside to within a few inches of my old bird, but the others, I watch at a distance.

Visitors who come to our home are greatly fascinated by these little winged marvels, and we who see them every day, never cease to take new delight in them. The females are the more easily attracted as they find the honey a good food supply for their nestlings.

We are deriving great pleasure from the Hummingbirds. The first one appeared at the egg cup on June 14, later than last year by eleven days. I am sure that she is the old original, for she came directly to the honey and needed no coaxing. For a month she had it to herself but has now been joined by at least two others.

To save frequent refills I have given them three plastic egg cups, two red and a blue placed on little shelves on the upright between the window panes. In front of two of them are perches. One little bird, a very neat and trim little lady with a whiter breast than the other invariably perches with wings folded while she sips her drink.

The old bird is very beligerent, often sitting on a low lattice about six feet back, while awaits she the arrival of the others. There are fierce pursuits and angry chirps as they whizz like bullets past the window or up over the house. She often reminds me of a little sentinel, with her tiny rifle pointed upwards toward what she considers her own private food supply.

I was amused one day to see a little bird remove one tiny foot from her feathers and scratch her head--all this, while still suspended in the air.



# Ringside Seat From a Tractor

*Hugh McLaughlin, Lewvan*

A tractor seat may not seem the accepted vantage point from which to view nature - but it certainly requires that you put in lots of hours outdoors and in the course of tilling a field, a very thorough coverage is made. There is much to be observed, and in an intimate way. Two birds quite predominate in early field work - the Horned Lark and Killdeer - so will confine remarks to these.

The Horned Lark is a sort of kindred bird who likes, somehow, to stay with us on these plains, as long as food is available in the fall. Then, after a brief absence in mid-winter, it re-appears in February - a token promise that spring is on the way. We might well wonder why any creature with wings would appear at this stage of the season to brave the last storms of winter. Nevertheless its cheery voice, as it calls from the vantage point of a little knoll or strawpile, is welcome at this early date.

It generally nests on a site of high ground - the first knolls of summer-fallow to become bare of snow - and will usually take advantage of a few sprigs of straw or clump of dirt as protection for its nest from north-west winds. It was quite common this spring to find nests that contain two eggs. Small nests quite often go unnoticed during tillage operations, But the Horned Lark is not hard to find. As the circuit around a field brings you closer and closer every round, the lark will rise from its nest but will not go far away.

Occasionally the implement is almost on top of a nest though, and there is no chance to turn aside. Such was the case this past April. I quickly carried nest and eggs aside; drove on a few feet and replaced them both. The lark did not move more than ten feet away and was soon back on the nest. The next day, as I went by, I examined her disturbed quarters and was pleased to see two young birds. Later in the week I had to remove a nest with young in it and then replace it after the discs had passed over the site. Young mouths opened gapingly whenever hands came near. But I did not linger - whirling discs must continue - there were other mouths to feed



and it was late.

The next morning was cold and frosty and, as I was still working close by, I looked to see how the young birds survived in improvised quarters. One had perished, but the other two were alive and Mother Lark was back on the nest as soon as I left. There she stood with outstretched wings covering her two young in the chill morning air. I could see why these early nests contain two or three eggs only. It was hard for such a tiny form to cover growing birds in cold weather - a brave little figure - while the implement passed close by.

A couple of weeks later, a pair of little birds will be trying wings and fluttering out of the way at any approach. They have been well fed on insects gleaned from the field by the lark parents, and in feeding their own children, have helped to feed ours by destroying grain damaging insects - good little partners of the prairie field.

The Killdeers are also early arrivals. and their noisy approach in spring with chattering "Kildee" is quickly noticed. They also like a bare knoll to nest on - a few pebbles for camouflage and there you are - a home and four eggs that blend remarkably with surroundings. Being a primitive type of bird; the eggs are laid in proportion to the size of the parent. Noisy mother - she squalls at any approach, fans tails her feathers and tries to entice you away with a bright ochre display of color. One, this past spring showed more courage, merely partly rising off the nest and shaking threatening wings.

*(continued on next page)*



# Nipawin Provincial Park

*By C. Stuart Francis, Torch River*

This has been a very ordinary summer as far as unusual happenings are concerned. The weather has been much too wet all through July and early August, but now seems to have improved.

We have made three trips into the Nipawin Provincial Park since July 1st. This is a very beautiful region with scores of lakes of various sizes, most of which contain several species of fish. Beautiful rolling hills surround the lakes. In some places the hill-sides are so steep that you can throw a stone into the water below from the top of a 150 or 200 foot hill. The forest is very varied and consists mostly of White and Black Spruce, Jack and Banksian Pine, White Birch, Tamarack, Aspen, Poplar, Balsam Poplar, Balsam Fir, and in some places native Juniper and Box Elder. Pin Cherry, Chokecherry, Hazelnut and Highbush Cranberry are widespread throughout the region.

On August 3rd., while travelling through the Narrow Hills, the native Crocus was observed starting to

bloom again in more than one spot, on stems two to three inches high, as in early spring. Possibly the very wet weather had something to do with this unusual occurrence.

We have recently acquired a lot on which to build a cabin at Fishing Lakes, which is about the centre of the park area. This lake is surrounded with evergreen forests. The lake and the streams near by contain the following species of fish: Northern Pike, Pickerel, Perch, Whitefish, Tulibee and Trout. Our cabin will be situated on a high bank overlooking the lake. It will be about 25 feet above the water on the north-east corner of the lake, in a sheltered location.

In this park are also to be seen many stands of Mistletoe infested Jack Pine. These infested trees are known as "Witches Broom" on account of the odd broom-shaped form of growth of the branches of the entire tree. It reminds one more of a desert or Mexican landscape, than of Northern Saskatchewan.

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## Ringside Seat -

*(continued from page 22)*

At such a brave display, even a tractor tiller had to turn aside; first to the west side, then to the east. But the nest was never forsaken either time. I believe that when eggs are far on in incubation the birds are much more reluctant to fly than when they are still laying eggs.

A couple of springs ago, while seeding near the buildings and also near Killdeer nest, sudden sleet storm came blowing in from the west. Ice pellets that stung the face sent me quickly heading for shelter. Wind that hurled dust and stubble tore in gusts across the field. Horses and cattle raced for the farm. And that night it snowed.

In the warm security of the house, that evening, I wondered if the Killdeer's nest would be thrown away. The answer came a couple of days later one sunny afternoon, when I noticed little fluffy balls on matchstick legs stumbling across the pasture. On rough ground they are easily caught

and these Killdeer babies were examined and cuddled a bit by the rest of the family and then returned to their anxious parents.

But how any bird could face those stinging pellets - cling to the ground in the wind and keep her eggs warm while an unreasonable snow covered the ground - well that is one of the intriguing things of nature.

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## Birding -- *(continued from page 9)*

are careless nesters - most of the nests were just hollows in the sand, without lining or cover. Many single eggs lay in the edge of the water, apparently blown from their nests by the wind and waves. Other eggs found back on shore had evidently been eaten by crows. There were between twenty and thirty tern nests in four different locations along half a mile of shoreline. On July 16, some nests still contain eggs, but I banded 24 young which had exchanged their down for feathers and were old enough to swim.



## Flowers in Profusion

*Mrs. E. C. Boon, Tullis*

After a wet year in '51 and an early spring, we too, were blessed with more than usual wild flowers. Purple Moss Phlox is quite common here. Before the prairie was all broken, we saw lots of it. There still is the odd patch.

The Yellow Violets (I haven't been able to identify them) (see this issue - Ed.) and purple violets flourished in unexpected places. We found two clumps of golden yellow flowers that are strangers to us. They looked much like tiny daffodils as individuals but grew in thick clumps. The closest we could find in our flowers quite was Puccoons. (This may be Many-stemmed Puccoon. The Linear grow singly, and the Hoary is bright orange in color. --Ed.) Star-grass bluebells grow side by side wherever they are unmolested.

It was the Western Red Lilies - our beloved Tiger Lilies - that surprised us most. My brother-in-law's pasture has a small coulee running through it. As far as we could see, the lilies dotted the bottom of the coulee. One the ungrazed portion they were so big and dark colored. We even found them in the ditch along the road this spring. Two and three flowers on one stalk were common. Some had four on them.

I think we could do with a lot more information for the general public on the correct way to pick Red Lilies. Being so showy, they are bound to be picked. If we could only stress the importance of leaving enough leaves to feed the bulbs, it would be a good thing.



## Breeding Grounds Located



L. Sutton of Aberdeen, S.D., while flying over the marches of Great Slave Lake. One bird was seen on July 11, and one the next day. Both color and white and black photographs were taken after bringing their Gruman amphibian down to around 100 feet and making several passes over the birds.

The mystery of the breeding grounds of the Whooping Crane has baffled ornithologists for more than half a century. The significance of the find is that a study may now be made to find out what enemies have reduced the flocks throughout the years. Field expeditions, probably backed by the Audubon Society, will, no doubt, be sent into the area as soon as possible to make a study of what predators destroy their eggs, or their nestlings, or attack the adult birds.

It is heartening to know that the breeding grounds of these fast disappearing four-footed waterfowl have at last been located. The discovery was made by two scientists, Robert H. Smith of Medford, Ore., and Everett



# The City Mouse

*S. P. Jordon, Saskatoon*

I am a city mouse and I write this story particularly for the benefit of the city dwellers. Possibly such experiences as I will describe will be more wonderful because of their uncommonness with city folk and I suspect that if they had shared them with me they would feel, as have I, like the city mouse who rarely visits the country and on such occasions always marvels at the interesting animals and birds he sees there. Won't you join me then O city dwellers — would it be but possible to put the enjoyable hours of a spring and summer into seven hundred words — while I relive the past three months of nature's gifts.

The ducks and crows greeted me on my first working morning. The crows had nested in a clump of trees by our machine shed — the ducks in a nearby slough. The crows raised a healthy family of four within five yards of where we daily ate our lunch. The young became so conditioned to our presence that I managed to stroke the head of a young bird which had just learned to fly. The crows often visited the slough. The Red-wings and the ducks made their characteristic fuss. The ducks disappeared. The water receded. About the middle of June I found the corpse of a Blue Winged Teal in some summerfallow that neighbored the slough. Tragedy — true — man caused, animal caused, who's to say, who's to know, who's to interfere?

What a wonderful thrill it was for me to see a large porcupine comfortably stationed in the crotch of a dead poplar tree. I stood glowing with delight, and watched him for a full five minutes. So fearless was he that he periodically blinked his eyes as if fighting sleep.

How much more satisfying for me to halt the tractor and capture a young Hungarian Partridge who lagged behind the rest, remove the hard packed clay from his rubbed raw toes, release him and watch him run like his brothers and sisters, than to watch him drop from the sky with lead in his heart.

I really believe that nature lovers and sportsman alike would be amazed at the number of animals and birds that either die or are painfully maimed by automobiles. One solution would be slower speeds. I counted 15 gopher corpses on a highway turn. On a 3 mile stretch between Regina and Sask-

atoon I counted 2 owls, 1 partridge, 1 meadowlark, 1 dead and 1 wounded Prairie Chicken, 1 long-tailed weasel and 3 rabbits. Multiply this by a few thousand and there will be some idea attained as to the amount of destruction which occurs on the paved prairie highways.

Who has ever been attacked by a week old Jack Rabbit? A little one I brought home certainly threw itself at my arm everytime I put it in his box. The fur on his back stood up and while his was not of fear. My wife seemed to know how to handle him for after being fed with an eye-dropper he curled up in her arms and went to sleep.

What a challenge it was to find a shrew and then to attempt to identify it as a *Cineveau* or a *Pigmy shrew*, North America's smallest mammal. The teeth alone seemed to be the only possible and positive guide and after an hour long study, aided by a magnifying glass, I identified my specimen, (equipped with viscious looking dentures) as the *Cineveus* or *Common Shrew*.

A 20 mile motor-pile on Last Mountain Lake enabled me to see a great variety of bird life, while-winged Scoters, Pelicans, California Gulls, Terns, Grebes and Franklin Gulls were common. Little Arm River abounded with hundreds of ducks. The rise in the water he made this a perfect breeding ground. Two Great Herons graced the air with the approach of our boat, Muskrats splashed, Hawks soared. On a land trip Jack Rabbits bounded away at our approach. Four deer, two majestic bucks and a beautiful doe and her fawn literally sailed over the rolling prairie when we flushed them from a coulee. Some time later the big V of the doe's ears revealed her presence as she stood in a clover field. Truly a naturalist's paradise.

Who has swayed with the wind atop a 30 foot poplar to seek out the occupant of a Red-tailed Hawk's nest. How worth while it was to find a fuzzy white defiant ball of beak, claws and feathers there to meet you at the rim. To be strangely not bothered by the parents that day but to be swooped at with screaming wings a week later when innocently passing by the nest.

So now the crows and the summer have gone. The leaves are leaving the blue. Gone but never forgotten.



## Birds in the Bath

*Mrs. H. Rodenberg, Kinlock, Sask.*

This has been a wonderful spring and summer for our birds. On May 23rd, while I was putting up another bird bath, I heard the nicest bird song. It sounded very much like a Robin but there was more to it, so I walked into the bluff and saw my first Rose-breasted Grosbeak. I got a within a few feet of him and found that the bird was not the least bit afraid of me as he kept right on singing. He truly is a beautiful bird, with a beautiful song.

Another bird we have here this summer is the Golden-crowned Sparrow. I never did hear him sing although I have seen him often. On May 24th the Orioles were here. They kept me busy hanging out string and horsehair. They took a minute off, once in awhile, for a drink from my bath. I love to hear their melodious whistle.

The Bluebirds seem to make most use of the bath, although I have seen many kinds of sparrows there too. Right now the Goldfinches make the most of it.

My Martin house was well occupied this summer. A pair of Tree Swallows nested in one of my houses. I love to watch them flying above their nests -- they truly are acrobats of the air.

How lucky those of us are who can look out of the window as I do and see the brilliant blue of the Bluebird, orange and black as Orioles flash by, the dainty Goldfinches flitting around, as well as other song birds, too numerous to mention by name. I spend hours just watching them.

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## Starlings Rapidly Spreading

*Henry Sevard, Alta.*

I saw a flock of forty or fifty Starlings last year - the first I had ever seen. They remained in restless flocks for a few days and then disappeared.

I discovered one of their nests in a hollow tree, which had been used by a flicker the previous year. She had five pale blue eggs, one of which I took for my collection.

This year I have seen many more, although they were in smaller flocks. They are rapidly spreading to new localities and will probably be common across the continent in a few more years.

## Bobolinks at Bladworth

*P. L. Beckie*

During the first week in July I had the good fortune to see a Bobolink. It was a hot day and they sallied forth from fence posts to feed on Blue-bur. At first, I thought they were the Brewer's Blackbird which are a common sight. The yellow patch on the nape, and white back seem to shine in the sun, like reflections from glossy Brewers.

This surely was an unusual sight for me - the first and last time I saw one being about ten years ago. I wonder if they are common this year. My only regret is that I did not stop the tractor to listen to their striking voice or song. The four males remained along the fence line for the better part of the day, but the following day they had moved on.

The Yellow-headed Blackbird is a rather common sight this year. I really find this bird to be interesting. With the gradual return of water to our larger sloughs, the Yellowhead has decided to try its luck around here. It is the first year that I have ever seen it in our district. I have noted about 11 pairs this summer.

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## Ducks Go Far

Dr. Stuart Houston recently received reports of another 81 waterfowl, from the approximately five thousand banded at Rousay and Leech Lakes near Yorkton, between 1944 and 1948.

64 Mallards were shot in 16 states and two provinces, topped by 13 in Arkansas, six each in Louisiana, Nebraska, North Dakota and Saskatchewan, and five each in Tennessee and South Dakota.

Of three Blue-winged Teal heard from, two reached south America! A Juvenile male banded August 29, 1948, was shot November 6 that same year, at "Popayan, Cauca Columbus, S.A." at an altitude of 1800 metres. An adult male banded June 19, 1945, was shot in January, 1950, at Lake Lorica, near Cartagena, Capital of the Department of Bolivar, Columbia, S.A.



## Baby Birds In My Garden

*Elizabeth Barker, Regina*

First the robins. The nestlings fed on my strawberries - poor ones from the edges of my patch which otherwise may have been tramped on. I could not begrudge these robins a few berries after they had so thoroughly spudded out all the cutworms from the freshly seeded garden. For a few days it was a mystery to me just what punched such holes in the ground. It would take a lot of strawberries to replace the returns from even one tomato plant cut off by a worm.

Then one baby Meadowlark which was being raised in the grass. It flew into the garden early one morning and landed in the strawberry bed with the robins. It took hold of a small berry plant on a long runner and held a real tug-of-war.

Next Ma Vesper Sparrow and her two almost full-grown paid a short visit, hunting insects under the leaves.

From July 22nd to August 2nd, a Barn Sparrow, raising one Cowbird chick was in residence around the yard. This was quite an interesting thing to see at first hand, as she struggled to raise her "problem child". I could not tell if they moved on together or if the Cowbird moved on alone, although it was just growing its tail and did not seem to hunt at all for itself. It may have been ready to return to its own parents.

The Arkansas and the common Kingbirds did not seem to have such good luck this year - one chick each, instead of three -- and then, not such regular visitors to my yard.

And last, but not least, English Sparrows, in tens and dozens, as usual.

## Dunking The Tid-Bits

*Mrs. G. W. Dowson, Mossbank*

One very hot July some years ago, I noticed the Grackles, nesting in trees across the street, being very active around the bird bath and apparently taking something out of it. Investigation showed nothing there, but later I saw that these birds were bringing moths, or what tid-bits they could find, dipping them several times in the water, and carrying them dropping to their nestlings.

The heat was so extreme during that period that the leaves turned brown around the edges, and almost dries up on the trees. Many baby birds must have died. I thought it very clever of the Grackles to try to supply the moisture needed by the tiny birds, but never before nor since, have I observed such a thing.

(This practice may be more common than you think. During the nesting season this summer, Grackles came again and again to my bird bath carrying crusts of bread that they had picked up in a neighbour's yard. They would throw the bread in the water, turn it over with their bills until it became well soaked, bring it out on to the lawn and then carry away all that they could to their young. By the time that they returned to get the rest of the prepared lunch the sparrows always had cleaned up the "works". They would then have to search for another dry crust and perform the whole operation all over again. - - Editor.)

Wanted: --(continued from page 12)

like this is undertaken, teacher and student alike will find themselves richer in experience, in interests and in real happiness.

We, who have been faithful followers of the "Blue Jay" through the past ten years, should do everything we can to spread an interest in

nature. Encourage our town and country teachers to expand their interests; give our young people the rein and let them go from there. Saskatchewan is indeed rich, and bounteous are her crops. Our young people must come to appreciate the natural heritage which is theirs, and which beckons to them even though the windows of a French classroom.



## Red Foxen

*Dr. G. J. Buck, Regina*

In July of 1944 I saw a Red Fox running wild just south of Golspie on the north east coast of Scotland. That was the last time until Sunday evening June 22nd. That evening my wife, small daughter and I went for a short drive westward along the Dewdney road, and had turned south about a mile and a half east of Grand Coulee when we saw two yellow-red animals bound eastwards across a bit of newly graded market road. It was difficult to believe that they were foxes. We stopped, for they had run into a fairly large patch of weeds and clover. Hoping to see more of them we got out of the car and could see the animals looking at us from the sweet clover. We moved towards them and in a moment four red foxes ran from cover out across the open field and shallow sloughs where hundreds of ducks are raising their young. The foxes were practically full-grown and were last seen looking at us from the ruins of an abandoned farmstead half a mile way.

### The Editors comment

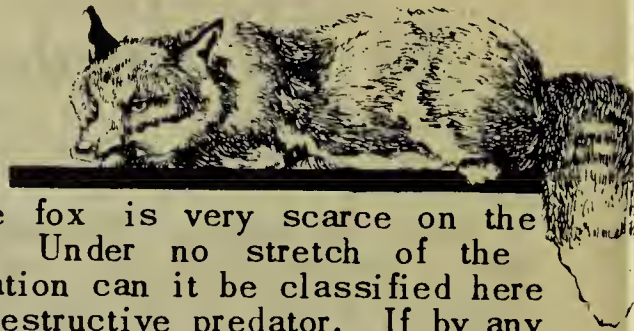
A few days after receiving this report many of us heard over the air, and read in the press an account of how group of "sportsmen" had "the time of their lives" hunting out, digging down and destroying these foxes. It was a gruesome story. A picture in the press displayed to the public what these vermin look like after they are dead.

## Prairie Chicken Friends

*Miss E. K. Jones, Raymore*

This spring a prairie chicken hatched out eight young in a bush close to our house. As her brood got bigger, she would take them for short walks across the grass and into the wheat field.

They became quite tame and we could observe them at will through the door and windows. Now, that they are full grown, we delight in seeing them come up to the front step and into the vegetable garden. The other day they were picking at the lettuce, and running up and down very unconcerned, with one standing guard. They come in the early morning and just about sun-down.



The fox is very scarce on the prairie. Under no stretch of the imagination can it be classified here as a destructive predator. If by any chance a resident should find one in the act destroying his chickens or property, there might be some justification in doing away with it -- otherwise there is none.

The fox is one link in the chain of nature; in its own way it helps to maintain the balance which is so essential. The fact that it does destroy a few ducklings may be of concern to the parent duck, but certainly not to "sportsmen" whose only desire is to preserve the ducklings in order that they might shoot them at a later date.

The thoughtless man is the most destructive predator of all and, wrapped up in his conceit he sometimes believes that he has been granted the God-given right of destroying those lower creatures which may interfere with his game bird sport.

Before we learned that these foxes were destroyed several different groups had seen them. The thought of killing never entered their minds. They were thrilled at the rare sight; they were pleased that a few of these animals were still around; they admired their beauty, their grace, their cunning; They returned home from their jaunt in the country with a feeling of elation, happy in the thought that they and their children had chanced to drive that way.

## A Badger On The Lawn

*E. K. Jones*

On August 6, I saw my first badger on the front lawn. It was very tame, and I stood about two feet ways, watching it chew on a bone.

Presently the cat came to see what it was. Her back arched as Mr. B. growled at her like a dog. We both observed the badger for about three-quarters of an hour. It just kept on chewing and growling. I had no idea badgers could be so tame.



# Reminiscences Of This Passing Season

*Ralph Stueck, Abernethy, Director*

It seems but yesterday since many of us were indoors, waiting for the first patch of bare ground. Finally it came. The snow banks began to disappear. Then one morning a Horned Lark gave his cheery note of greeting—spring was on its way. Yes, and there just below the kitchen window were five little grey and white Juncos. They were joined by two Song Sparrows, then a White-crowned Sparrow with his new spring bonnet. My heart began to thump. Just wait until I get to the Qu'Appelle Valley for it is there that Old Mother Nature paints Spring in the heart.

We watched the migration of the birds from the south and felt indebted to the Supreme Being who has planned all these wonderful things for our enjoyment. The sloughs filled up with water; then the ducks appeared with their "quack, quack," while above the "honk, honk" of the Canada Geese could be plainly heard. It is at this season of the year, early in the morning that spring really enters within your soul. With ears and eyes you are wide awake. Eagerly we listen to a distant "boom, boom", then a whirring sound of the Prairie Chicken dancing on the hill. Listen! There must be thirty or more to greet the rising sun. Then what is that distant strange "thump, thump" - then faster still "thump, thump, thump", with a whirr like distant thunder. It is the male Ruffed Grouse. There by the hour he drums on a hollow log to inform his letter half that he is not away in the woods, flirting with some other lady. Yes, friends, these are the signs of spring on the prairies.

At no place on earth do people wait more eagerly for the coming of spring, then as the curtain slowly but surely rises, once more summer is ushered in. Soon every living thing is at its best. The gardens have yielded bounteous returns. The fields of grain waved, waste high, as far as the eye could see. We cherish the thought that these prairies are yours and mine to enjoy. We think of the wheat as a



The author with Jonathan, his talking goose.

treasure of gold that will eventually be as asset to our Dominion.

Nature is a builder and soon, too soon, she has completed the building of summer. The wild ducks are flying about in small flocks. The Blackbirds are gathering in larger flocks. The swallows are sitting in rows on yonder telephone wire. The scene is "Fall". The farmers are anxiously wondering when the first frost will come. The leaves are turning colors of gay red, yellow and brown. The Qu'Appelle Valley is painted in scenes that an artist cannot duplicate. It is here for us to enjoy for perhaps three weeks, then one by one the leaves are falling back to old Mother Earth from whence they came.

Each day some new bird calls in to say goodbye. Soon the trees will be bare again, and the sounds of harvest will cease. Then silently little snowflakes will come floating down.

Can you guess the scene as the curtain rises once more. Kind folks, I am going to leave it for you to paint in your own hearts, and as you do let Nature help you build a cheery fireplace within.





Mr. Street banding a Junco. The box is a gathering cage.

Besides supplying data to further important investigations relative to the migrations and life histories of North American birds, there are often many incidents that are only of personal interest to the bander involved. Bird Banders never know from day to day what the take or results will be, as seldom are two days alike, two seasons or two years. The migrations or movements of birds are quite often erratic, species that are abundant or easily caught one year may be unaccountably absent, or at best difficult to trap the next. Then there is the never ending attempts to devise methods or improve others to take greater numbers and more species. Those are the things that make bird banding so interesting.

Early this spring I trapped a male Robin already wearing a band. This bird had been banded by Billy Matthews at his station, some 3 miles distant, in 1950. I quickly discovered that this bird was mated to a female banded by me, also in 1950. The nest of this pair was not located, but in due course brought their 4 young to my banding station and all 4 were promptly banded. Shortly after, all disappeared. However, late in July, this same pair returned with two young, which I also banded. This proved to me for the first time that a pair would remain mated for two nests in the same season.

The first Vireos I ever trapped were two Blue-headed Vireos, taken two weeks apart in May. In mid June I heard a male of this species singing in the park across the street from my banding station. Several times in the next two weeks an attempt was made to locate this brilliant songster

## Bird Banding

*Maurice G. Street, Nipawin,*

*Director S.N.H.S.*

without success, his territory appeared to cover about 7 acres of mixed pine and poplar, large part of which had dense undergrowth. On July 10th I trapped a Blue-headed Vireo, which proved to be a female with a well defined brood patch, the bird I had banded May 29th. By careful watching of the adults as they collected food for their brood, the nest containing, 2 young and one infertile egg, was found July 14th, seven feet from the ground in a poplar sapling growing in the shade of a huge Jackpine. The male Blue-headed was also wearing a band, while not proven, was undoubtedly mine, also.

Finding a pair of Pigeon Hawks nesting, not over a mile from Nipawin I had great hopes of banding the brood of this little falcon, quite rare in this district. The nest was located about 30 feet up a thick spruce which had been planted some years ago about a farm home, but where now no buildings remain. The Falcons were left undisturbed until June 17th when it was decided the young, if any, would be large enough to band. Not to be however, the nest contained only one infertile egg, which the female was still brooding. Still a worthwhile nesting record for this district.

Chancing to be in a farmer's yard, with no one home, on August 7th, the farm fowl suddenly began to scurry to seek shelter in all directions. I glanced upwards to see, just in time, a bittern execute a wide circle and alight in the yard on the opposite side of a rail fence to me. Deciding here would be a bird worth banding, I picked up an old broom and started to climb the fence. Then the Bittern, seeing me for the first time, pointed its back skyward and compressing its body as only a bittern can, stayed perfectly still to escape notice. Moving stealthily forward I got within broom range of it when it suddenly flew directly for my face. Somehow managed to knock it down and hold it there with my broom until I caught it by the neck. Next, I

*(continued on next page)*



located a cardboard box and placing the bird inside began to look about for some string to tie it shut. Seeing none, I decided to turn the box upside down. In doing so the bottom fell out and only narrowly did I escape getting struck in the eye by its sharp beak before recapturing it. Just then the farmer returned home and after showing him the bird, remarked, "You did well to get that fellow, must be the one that's getting my chickens". Swallowing hard, I explained that this was a Heron, not a Hawk. Arriving back in town I dropped the bird, still in the box, at the office. Returning a few moments later, I was surprised to see every available article, including a chair, atop the box. It seems that a Bittern, more feathers than flesh, can escape through any opening that will allow the neck and one leg to be thrust through. The bird was released wearing a band at a suitable slough.

From my kitchen window I have a string running to an ordinary drop-trap, 3 feet by 4 feet and 7 inches deep. This was one of my first traps. Having been used for several years, it caught over 2500 birds, it lacked a few repairs. Accidentally, one day

during my absence, it was tripped and remained so until my return that evening. My wife questioned me then, as to why I had left two birds in it. I said I hadn't. Then she explained she had released them. Examining the trap I found two small birds still in it. Being more puzzled, I noticed a small hole near the center of the trap, barely an inch in diameter and directly over the edge of the pan of water supplied from a water drip pail above. Knowing the birds had entered the trap through the small hole to get the water, I enlarged the hole to two inches square. From August 1st to August 28th, this trap had taken nearly 400 Warblers, all having entered through this small hole. Nearly 300 of these Tennessee Warblers. The remainder being made up of the following species; Black & White, Nashville, Capemay, Myrtle, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Palm. Mourning, and Redstarts. Incidentally the nearly 300 Tennessees banded during this period are more than the average banded yearly by all banders together in North America. All this by a trap accidentally tripped, and a small hole.

#### Blue Hurons - (continued from page 6)

The young are comical looking with their long legs and big bills. When angered, they look quite fierce, stretching long necks and raising the feathers on top of their heads. till it stands straight up. They don't hesitate to strike at you either and are quite capable of giving you a nasty peck.

When we left the trees that harboured the colony we came out on a beautiful flat, and there stood at least fifty Blue Herons -- a sight that is worth travelling a long distance to behold.

#### Alone the Byways -

(continued from page 20)

grasshoppers, it almost stepped in front of the car, but swerved in time. There was a hasty retreat to the wheat field.

In the spring we noticed a number of jack rabbits walking rather than hopping about in the fields, It was an action we had never seen before. They seemed to be searching carefully for something as each would stop from time to time and then proceed. When mentioning this to a friend later, he spoke of a rumor that at this time of year the males go on such walks in search of young rabbits to destroy them. Does anyone have further information on this theory?

Sunsets along these by ways were brilliant or dull according to the cloud formations. They were always something to watch with an uninterrupted view as we came back to town. The speedy passing of the weeks was cause for lamentation that all too soon such rides would be over until another year.

#### Pretty But Somewhat Smelly

(continued from page 14)

istic smell remained. Spider-flower belongs to the Capparidaceae or Caper family, in which family is the Caper used to make sauce for mutton. Incidentally, when I was a youngster we made our caper sauce from Nasturtium seeds and used their leaves in sandwiches.



# Some Hard Facts

## About Conservation

W. Yanchinski, Naicam, Director S.N.H.S.

When I was a young lad it was part of my daily chores, during the summer, to bring the cows in from the open range for the evening milking. Often it involved tedious wandering through miles of wilderness, but what made a most lasting impression on my mind were the seemingly endless chains of sloughs and streams that stretched from horizon to horizon, and the variety and multitude of wild life in their vicinity.

Today, hardly more than a quarter of a century later, the landscape is barely recognizable; the sloughs which constituted such formidable barriers to a school boy, intent on getting the cows home, have all but disappeared and with them the wild things which flourished there.

Recently on a motor trip to Lac La Ronge I had hoped that in this northern hinterland, hundreds of miles inside a supposedly untouched wilderness, I knew so well as a boy. To my dismay, I found it next to impossible to get a camera shot of scenery from the road without including in the picture that common farm weed, the Perennial Sow Thistle. Yet this pest was quite unknown to most of the farmers less than a generation ago.

To the pioneer settler, the wilderness appeared boundless and inexhaustible but after a brief orgy of cutting, burning and plowing, we have already reached the last frontier. With the help of modern mechanical contrivances we have set off a chain reaction of forces which have all but overwhelmed any efforts on the part of Nature to maintain some semblance of balance in the plant and animal life. It is a stark but inescapable fact that many species, which have suffered most from this disturbance, are now so near the brink of extinction that they are certain to pass into oblivion no matter what we did to prevent it.

And yet, here in our province, there is a group of "sportsmen" that is even now clamoring to have shooting on Sundays made legal. Perhaps some wild creature, which at this very moment is fighting a last ditch



stand for its life may owe its eventual survival to that one day in the week when the slaughter of all wild things is forbidden. The Lord decreed that the Sabbath be observed as a day of peace and rest, and I am sure He never intended to withhold His grace even from the lowliest of His creatures.

This matter should be of deep concern to every citizen, but especially so to such groups as the Natural History Societies -- for the vast majority of people are not now and probably never will be active in any conservation group. An average citizen of this country may not know the difference between a Wood Pewee and a Hairy Woodpecker, and cares even less, but he has accepted, though unconsciously perhaps, the wonders of bird migration, nesting and other majestic phenomena of nature, as indispensable to his environment as the rain and the sun.

He wants to go to church on a Sunday morning or to a picnic at the lake, without having bullets whistling about his ears.

It is an organized group, like our Society, that can most effectively speak up for him and help preserve for his family and for posterity some samples of primeval wilderness - the wilderness which nurtured this country and made it the land of golden opportunities.



If you can possibly arrange to do so, plan to attend the sessions of the annual meeting of our Society. Come ready to express your opinions, to offer suggestions about the future welfare of the Blue Jay and to enjoy the interesting items on the program.

The program is only tentative. Changes may be made, but if you come you may rest assured that you will have a good and profitable time.

## ANNUAL MEETING OF SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Tentative Program                      Monday,                      October 20/52, at Provincial Museum

- 10.00 A.M.      Registration  
                    President Doug Gilroy opening address
- 10.10 A.M.      "Water Fowl of the Leaf Lake Area."  
   K.E. Baines, Tisdale, Sask.
- 10.30 A.M.      Appointment of Committees  
   Resolutions Committee  
   Nominations Committee
- 10.45 A.M.      Archaeology Film      Museum (Fred Bard)
- 11.10 A.M.      "Magic in the Woods."      T. Mack, Lumsden, Sask.
- 11.40 A.M.      "Interesting Observations in Research of Native Vegetation."  
   A.C. Budd.

### AFTERNOON MEETING

- 1.50 P.M.      Illustrated Lecture by Arthur Ward, Swift Current, Sask.
- 2.10 P.M.      Film on Song Birds.
- 2.20 P.M.      Business Meeting - - - L.T. Carmicheal
- 3.10 P.M.      Report of Resolutions Committee  
                    Disucssion Period
- 3.30 P.M.      Report of Monimating Committee
- 4.00 P.M.      "Flowers of the Province." - - - L.T.Carmicheal  
   (illustrated)

### EVENING MEETING

Joint meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society and the Regina Natural History Society, At Provincial Museum.

Doug Gilroy  
Ernie Paynter

Guest Speakers - - - - - C.C. Shaw, Yorkton, Sask.  
   Dr. George Ledingham, Regina

"Adventures in Rock." F.S. Robinson.

There are a limited number of this special anniversary number of the Blue Jay available at a cost of twenty-five cents each. You may wish to send some to friends. There are also a few copies left of the last two issues.



Mr William ANAKA,

SPIRIT LAKE

SASK.

Dec. 31, 1952.

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*Edited by Lloyd T. Carmichael*

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